

Santa Rosa County  
Emergency Services Advisory Committee  
January 25, 2006  
2:00 p.m.

MINUTES

**Members present:**

James Chalmers  
John E. Reble

Joe Diamond  
Don Vanderryt

**Members absent:**

Stephen Cozart  
Tony Simmons

Werner Panchenko

**Staff present:**

Sheryl Bracewell

Deb Grinde

Agenda approved as submitted for this meeting with the following exception: J. Diamond requested that Item B, Day Time FD Coverage, be added under New Business. Motion made and carried by this committee.

Minutes for meeting held on October 26, 2005 approved as submitted.

**Persons to Appear**

Joel Haniford

County Budget Director

Mr. Haniford appeared before this committee to explain the budgeting process utilized to track the funds provided to the fire districts that are provided MSBU funding.

First a letter is issued to each department along with a document that has been formatted for budget purposes. The form has different areas to be completed by documenting approximately how much money will be spent in each account. This document is filed by the Office of Management and Budget. The fire districts do not have to spend exactly as they forecasted. In addition they do not receive exactly what they requested nor are they limited to what they forecasted. They actually receive what was collected by the Property Appraiser collections as MSBU funds and checks are issued on a monthly basis. They are not limited to only these funds.

An annual audit is performed on their expenditures by the Finance Department to check the departments procedurally.

H. Walker, County Administrator, advised the county focuses on the audit which is really a summary of activities; then the county augments the slow growing areas. All of the monies are dispensed.

Discussion ensued regarding the fire districts' budgets, audits and procedures. J. Haniford stated that the county has nothing to do with how the departments spend their money.

Chief Reble mentioned that when this committee recommended an increase to the MSBU funding, the BOCC responded that there was a lack of accountability on the part of the fire districts.

H. Walker stated that a decision must be made regarding how much involvement the county should have when it comes to administering the fire districts.

Chief Reble noted that some districts have not submitted a budget to date.

H. Walker indicated that the current structure would allow all MSBU funds to be gathered together and distributed according to each districts' needs. This would be an example of a true resource allocation.

Chief Reble stated that they are public funds and some type of oversight should exist. He also said that a lack of oversight could lead to a rippling effect throughout the county; however, at the same time we do not want to overburden the volunteers. J. Diamond, Avalon VFD, suggested that the fire districts' boards, who do oversee the spending, do not control the spending very well at times.

Chief Reble mentioned again that the interest rates for financing fire trucks could be lower at a later time. The loan could then be re-financed and the money saved could be spent on an additional vehicle. He reiterated that interest rates available to county and municipal agencies are lower than those offered to individual fire departments. The fire district has no recourse and the county enjoys the better interest rates. The Chief suggested that the county may purchase the vehicles and the fire districts, then, could pay back the county.

Chief Reble stated that the county ends up focusing more closely on those capital items purchased by the county than they do those capital items purchased by the fire districts. He questioned how the county tracks those items purchased by the fire districts, for instance if they are sold, destroyed or listed as surplus.

Mr. Walker indicated that the money from the items can only revert back to the fire districts.

Chief Reble questioned how the county knows whether the MSBU funds are kept separate from the general funds. Mr. Walker indicated that from the county's point of view they are considered to be the same accounts.

Chief Reble explained that audits reveal that there are items outside the scope of fire protection. He indicated that when the fire districts pay taxes those taxes become lost revenue. He also explained that the fire districts have a totally separate checking account for anything else that they would like to do. These funds are generated by fund raisers, cookouts, etc.

Mr. Walker suggested that someone may have to determine how much of this is worth taking the time to actually look into...

Chief Reble stated that maybe the Board of County Commissioners could look at some of the issues discussed including interest rates, etc.

Mr. Walker stated that the issues could be reviewed by a small group to be sure the processes are in line.

Chief Reble responded that this committee would offer some recommendations.

J. Haniford stated that if it is determined that there is a better way for the fire departments to report their numbers the OMB will be happy to modify the current budget form. Chief Reble suggested that it may be necessary to break out some of the items. In addition, Chief Reble stated that this committee feels very strongly that someone should be tasked with follow up of the problematic areas. He also stated that because the fire districts' financial reporting was not in order the BOCC did not take any action on the request for additional MSBU funds.

Mr. Walker responded that the county should be able to accommodate this request.

J. Haniford stated that the financial person with each fire district should be responsible for correcting each of the situations documented on the audits.

J. Diamond stated that it is still necessary for the districts to justify their needs.

Richard Collins, Pace, FL, advised this committee that the clerk's auditor guidelines for auditing the fire districts' budgets are provided by the state. He stated that any request for help from the BOCC has usually been nothing. He also indicated the auditor could use some guidelines from the county regarding what the county wants the auditor to look for. He suggested that possibly a combination of both the state and the county could be provided to the fire districts so that they are better able to develop this.

Mr. Walker stated that the county would put together something for the districts to work with. He also indicated that as the county expands the roles within the Emergency Management Division will become more involved in the business of the fire districts. Mr. Walker added that when the budget forms were made available initially it was so that the OMB could assist them in managing their funds.

Chief Reble concluded by stating that the fire departments are making substantial commitments to long term financial activities that are vulnerable to these issues.

### **Old Business**

#### **Inmate Work Crews**

Chief Reble has not received a response from H. Walker to date and also suggested that if not inmate work crews then possibly the county work crews could perform the lawn maintenance. Mr. Walker stated that he would re-address this issue and advise this committee.

#### **Reflectors**

Specs are being gathered in order to request a quote for this service to be performed. In addition, we will be able to have current hydrant valve information as soon as this is accomplished.

### **Review of Reports and Statistics**

Reports for the months of October, November and December were reviewed by this committee. Chief Reble noted that East Milton made a marked improvement to 0% of no response calls.

Allentown VFD performance will be a concern as the Chief has stepped down to firefighter rank; the Assistant Chief has taken on the responsibility of Fire Chief.

### **Old Business**

#### **No-Response Rates Issues**

East Milton's statistics show that positive action on their part indicates that these numbers are within their capabilities if they focus on the issues!

#### **MSBU Fire Department Budgets**

This committee reviewed and made recommendations to improve the budget worksheets that are distributed to the MSBU fire districts. The current worksheet includes eleven (11) different categories. S. Bracewell advised that her division will attend the March Santa Rosa County Firefighters Association meeting and provide some direction in completing the budget forms. The following recommendations have been made:

Repair and Maintenance account should break out vehicles from facilities

Add Training account

Add Fuel, Oil account

Define or replace Other Current Charges #549001

Add Freight & Postage

Breakdown Insurance categories and eliminate Bonds

Add Utilities

Add Operating Supplies

Add Capital Equipment (purchase price > \$1,000.00)

Add Capital Improvement

Discussion held regarding Inventory Control of capital items including various purchases of different types of equipment, turn-out gear, etc.

Chief Reble will email a list of recommendations to OMB.

#### **MSBU Fire Department Audits**

This committee will wait to hear from H. Walker regarding audit responsibilities.

## Fire Hydrant Maintenance Project

Reflectors will be ordered. This committee will wait to hear from H. Walker regarding the requests for quotes to be issued on the services required for this project.

### **Review of Correspondence**

Reviewed a copy of a letter issued to H. Walker regarding the audits of the fire departments.

Copy of letter provided to each of the MSBU fire districts at the start of the budget preparation.

Copy of budget instructions used by the county was distributed for review by this committee

### **New Business**

#### Hurricane Preparedness

This committee would like to address the issue of availability of fuel before, during and after a hurricane. Concerns are based on the fact that the availability of fuel was low and the cost for the fuel was high.

S. Bracewell stated that seven (7) fire departments requested gas tanks from the county. One (1) department purchased their own tank. S. Bracewell has been charged with working up a bid for a 500 gallon diesel tank and a 300 gallon regular fuel tank to be located at each of the stations. The fire departments will furnish fuel if the county provides the tanks.

This committee questioned whether the fuel could be located closer to the area. S. Bracewell advised that the State Division of Emergency Management's (DEM) stand regarding fuel is to bring in tanker vehicles of fuel along the evacuation route for evacuation purposes. They will provide the vendor, not the fuel. Their idea is to Survive the Storm-Maintain Readiness! In addition, there is some discussion on the state's part regarding the gas stations being required to purchase generators in order to pump the gasoline; a determination has not been made at this time.

S. Bracewell also advised this committee that the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) is approved by the state, adopted by the Board of County Commissioners and posted on line with detailed roles for all agencies and the citizens of Santa Rosa County. S. Bracewell stated that some of the things we are proposing:

the county strive for self sufficiency

area churches participate

maintain an active Community Emergency Response Team (C.E.R.T. ) base

review roles and plans for each Emergency Support Function (ESF) on a regular basis

review agreements with suppliers on a regular basis to ensure availability

#### Daytime Coverage for Fire Departments (added to Agenda)

A structural fire occurred in the Skyline area this date and with the exception of the City of Milton Fire Department no other agencies were able to respond. The Emergency Management Communications Center (EMCC) had to turn to Escambia County for their assistance.

Discussion ensued regarding the number of firefighters available who have had the 160 training and might be available during the day time hours. The discussion also led toward the subject of how many firefighters are enroute to a call, how many are on each vehicle and whether this information is documented. S. Bracewell stated that we do include the information when it is provided. At this time it does not differentiate between the trained firefighters and those who have not completed the training. However, an updated version of software will provide even more information when it is installed.

### **Public Comments and Questions**

Richard Collins, Pace, FL

Mr. Collins requested that ESAC attempt to procure a listing of board members of each fire department. The published listings do not reflect the current members or current addresses of the departments.

Mr. Collins indicated that the budget requests are required to have the chairman of the board of the fire department sign the documents; this would indicate that they are aware of the budget requests.

Mr. Collins queried S. Bracewell regarding the new job position of Training & Operations Chief. He was advised that the position was not filled at this time. It will be filled within the next three (3) weeks. He questioned what the job description entailed with regard to the MSBU fire departments. S. Bracewell stated that the person will work closely with the Fire Departments; the position requires someone who is certified as a firefighter with 160 training. The person will provide assistance to the departments in coordinating their budgets, reporting, activities, training, etc.

Upon further questioning by Mr. Collins, Chief Reble stated that this was not the correct arena for these types of questions and that he would prefer that he question S. Bracewell at another time and place.

Further Mr. Walker has discussed with S. Bracewell the idea that maybe the ESAC committee could meet on a quarterly basis. Chief Reble does not think this would be the appropriate time to go to that schedule as we have several items on the agenda.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Next meeting is Wednesday, March 22, 2006 at 2:00 PM